Shiism in the View of Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.)
The Attributes of the Shiite person

By Sayed Fadhlallah

In Islam, Shiism is not something separated from Islam, but it represents Islam in all its morals and human feelings of responsibility toward others.

Imam Al-Baqir was told by a man called Abu Ismail: We have a lot of Shiites. The Imam asked him: Do the rich give the poor, and does the offended forgives the offender and do they visit one another to offer condolences?"

When the man said that they do not, the Imam said: "Those are not Shiites". That is because the Shiite person is the one who abides by the Islamic morals in the social relationships, thus he helps the poor, forgives the offender, and consoles his brother by himself and by his money, and the one who does not do so, he will be deviate from the path of Islam that is the path of Shiism…

Imam Al-Baqir (a.s.) sent with Khaithama Bin Abd El-Rahman Al-Jaa'fi, one of his companions a letter to his Shiia followers and to all Muslims. He says in the letter: "Convey my greetings to our followers and advise them - it is an advice for us also because we are among his followers and we adhere to their Imamate - "…And advise them to fear Allah, the Magnificent, tell them that their rich should sympathize with the poor, and the strong should sympathize with the weak. They should attend the funerals of their dead and visit one another, for their meeting keeps our cause alive…, And that they cannot become among our followers except by piety, communication, unity, love, and remembrance of all the vital issues that gather all people. And their main concern is Islam in all its doctrines, rulings, values, and morals…

The Imam also said: "Kahithama. Tell our followers that nothing will save them when they meet Allah but their good deeds and verily, the most sorrowful person on the Day of Judgment is a man who praises justice but acts against it."

Thus, loyalty is neither a heartbeat nor a sensation, but it is to be loyal to Allah, obey Him, follow the Prophet (p.) and Ahlelbiet (a.s.), and adhere to their path in obeying Allah and loving him.

Al-Baqir (a.s.) clarifies to his Shiites that: "being loyal to us means abiding by the path of Allah and His Prophet (p.), and when you belong to us, the imamate in the path of Islam, this means that you talk to people about justice that this loyalty represents and about the right that it is based on. And if you violate these beliefs, you will be the most sorrowful people on the Day of Judgment because you will be talking to people about justice while acting against it and those who observed what you had said, entered Heaven, while you will go to Hell, because you did not abide by the justice that you had talked about.

Facing exaggeration

The Imam wanted to put the foundations of the intellectual basis and establish the detailed practical plans in the movement of values through the relationships of the society, so we realize how he used to be afraid on Shiism from exaggeration as a result of the unconscious love. He (a.s.) says: Oh followers of Ahl Al Beit! Be moderate so that both those who exaggerate and the ones who understate will follow you. When asked by a man of Al-Ansar about those who exaggerate are he answered: 'They are those who attribute things to us which we do not have…" (In other words give us a higher position than God gave us), "Those people do not belong to us and we do not belong to them. By God; we have no guarantee of salvation… we have no special relation with God that

obliges Him to save us. Our only way to draw nearer to God is through obedience. Therefore, only those of you who obey God will benefit from being our followers. Oh people! Do not be deceived. Do not be deceived.

The meaning of Shiism

Shiism does not represent a personal belonging to Ali (a.s.) and his family (Ahlelbeit (a.s.)), but it represents the belonging to the path of the Prophet (P.) that they followed, worked and struggled for it. He also tells the people about how to be real Shiites. He says to Jabir bin Abdallah: "Is it enough for a person to embellish himself as our Shi'a (follower) by professing love for us, the Ahlelbeit? Nay! By Allah, a person is not our follower unless he fears Allah and obeys Him. Our followers are only recognized, O Jabir, by their humbleness, submission, honesty, abundant praise of Allah, fasting and prayers; goodness to their parents; attention to the poor, needy, debtors and orphans living nearby; speaking the truth; recitation of the Quran; holding their tongues except for good words; and trustworthiness towards relatives in all affairs".

"…If a man says I love the Messenger but does not follow his teachings, his love will do him no good. Therefore be pious and know that has a special relationship with God. God loves those of you who are pious and obedient most. We have no power to save you from the fire! And God is not obliged under any circumstances to save you either. Whoever obeys God is one of our followers and whoever disobeys Him is one of our enemies. Being one of our followers cannot be attained other than thorough hard work and piety."

O Jabir, without 'ita'ah' (obedience and submission), nobody can attain proximity to Allah. We do not like them to claim to be our friends if they do not fulfill all the conditions. A sinful person is our enemy. Without good deeds and abstinence from sins, any claim of friendship to us is of no avail."

The sacrifice in Ali's (a.s.) loyalty

Al-Baqir (a.s.) clarifies the characteristics of the Shiia in another way. He says (a.s.): Ali's Shiites are those who help, love and visit one another – those who visit one another and do not conspire to ruin people or deform a person's image, but to revive Allah's religion that the Prophet (p.) and the Imams (a.s.) (his household) have lived for the sake of reviving–, Those, who if they get angry, do not become unjust, - they stay well-balanced, and do not wrong the one whom they are angry with –, and those who when pleased, will not over spend, if they love, they do not exaggerate in their love and do not give the one whom they love more than what he deserves… But, unfortunately, we raise those whom we love, to the highest ranks, and put down those whom we dislike to the lowest ranks. For that reason, we should be the well-balanced people who give every one his right. So, we should not wrong anyone's right or raise any one more than he deserves –, those who would be a blessing to their neighbors and peaceful to those whom they deal with.